GIs Got Drug in 1960

By Bill Richards
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The CIA monitered or took part in several LSD testing projects run by U.S. agencies during the 1950s because it feared the drug might be given to U.S. diplomats operating abroad, according to a former CIA chemist who was the contact with one of these projects.

In addition, said Dr. Robert Lashbrook, who was the intelligence agency's contact with an LSD-testing project at Ft. Detrick in central Maryland, the CIA also conducted what he called "pencil and paper experiments" in administering the drug to foreign diplomats.

"They were very theoretical programs to determine whether it was feasible," said Lashbrook, during an interview from his home in Ojai, Calif. "I'm not aware that it went any further."

Lashbrook said the CIA maintained liaison contacts with LSD testing projects being conducted by the Army at Ft. Detrick, Edgewood Arsenal and the Aberdeen Proving Ground, both in northeast Maryland, and by the National Institutes of Mental Health in Bethesda.

It also was learned yesterday that the Army tested LSD on soldiers in 1960 at Ft. Benning, Ga., and that at least one Army officer has since complained that he may have developed epilepsy from being exposed to the drug. According to one participant, this LSD testing was conducted by researchers flown to Georgia from Aberdeen Proving Ground.

See LSD, A8, Col. 6

LSD, From A1

Since November, the Army Surgeon General's office has been conducting extensive physical and psychological examinations of all 33 men who were given LSD during the project at Ft. Benning 15 years ago, according to a former Army officer who said he was one of the 33.

An Army spokesman said last night that any medical followup project conducted by the Army is under the authority of the Surgeon General's office. The spokesman said he could not reach anyone from that office last night.

The spokesman said records of the LSD tests at the Army Chemical Center at Edgewood Arsenal, which several civilian researchers in that project said were conducted on hundreds of soldiers and civilians, were ordered reviewed yesterday for possible declassification.

A spokesman for the National Institutes of Mental Health in Bethesda confirmed yesterday that testing of LSD was done during the 1950s at the federal facility. The spokesman said he could not learn late yesterday whether the CIA was involved. The tests involved males and females, he said, and includd some conscientious objectors from the Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren serving out their alternate military service.

In another development, a state legislator said yesterday that the CIA covertly funded tests of computers and drugs, including LSD, at a state mental health research amphetamines and barbiturates, but not center in Houston between 1964 and 1971. The intelligence agency was seeking to use the drug and computer tests carried on under the program to develop a "super" lie detector, according to State Rep. Lane Denton of Waco.

Denton said the project at the Texas Research Institute for Mental Science (TRIMS) appeared to have only "marginal relevance" to the treatment or study of mental illness, the tasks assigned the state-supported facility by the state legislature.

Dr. Neil R. Burch, a researcher who composed the polygraph studies in the TRIMS project, said they were funded by the CIA, the Air Force and Navy. He said the results of the program had mental health applications. The CIA has refused comment on the allegations.

Rep. Thomas J. Downey (D-N.Y.), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, yesterday requested a formal investigation by the committee of allegations this week of widespread testing of drugs such as LSD on military bases around the country.

Lashbrook, in a long telephone interview yesterday with The Washington Post, said the primary incenitve for the intelligence agency's participation in LSD testing projects in the 1950s was a fear by agency officials that the then-relatively unknown durg might be used on U.S. officials.

Lashbrook and three other CIA employees were part of an LSD experiment conducted in 1953 on Dr. Frank Olson and at least three other scientists at a Western Maryland hideaway.

Olson committed suicide about a week after he was given the drug without his knowledge. Lashbrook said yesterday that the suicide only confirmed the CIA's fears of the drug's potential and that additional testing of the drug's effects was undertaken by the CIA. He said he was part of that adidtional testing program despite his own reservations about the hallucinogen.

In addition to the three other CIA employees who Lashbrook said were present at the time Olson was given LSD, the former agent said a number of other CIA agents were also monitored or participated in LSD-research programs in the 1950s.

Most of the CIA's research work in the area of human testing with the drug following the Olson death involved about five psychiatrists, Lashbrook said. He declined to identify any of them.

"At that time," said Lashbrook, "the big emphasis was on the cold war bit and all that . . . There were boogeymen here and there and everyplace."

"At that time very little was known about LSD. And there was great concern as to the possibility of it being used

against our own people. I think the people the agency was primarily worried about were outside the country, diplomats and so forth. They were more or less vulnerable."

Lashbrook said he did not know of any instance of LSD being administered to any American official.

The former intelligence agent said that while he was aware of LSD testing being conducted at Edgewood Arsenal—known at the time as the Army Chemical Center—he did not recall the identity of specific operatives in the project.

Several civilian researchers who took part in the LSD tests at Edgewood said earlier this week that hundreds of civilians and soldiers were tested with LSD in sessions at both Edgewood and at the University of Maryland Medical School in Baltimore.

Maj. Gen. Lloyd Fellenz, a retired Army officer who was in charge of the Edgewood facility during the late 1950s, said yesterday that the tests were common knowledge and that only a few officers and men took part in them.

Several persons who said they took part in the tests called The Washington Post yesterday and said the LSD sessions at the Edgewood base lasted into the 1960s and involved substantial numbers of troops.

One former soldier, who said he took part in such testing in 1958, said that between 45 and 50 men in his group alone were brought in from military bases including Andrews Air Force Base and Fort Carson, Colo.

Richard Wevodau, who is now an employee of the American Postal Union here and lives in Harrisburg, Pa., said that he and the other members of his group were given hallucinogens at Edgewood on three oc- said yesterday that 33 men were given group spent there. Wevodau said he and the other group members were presented with certificates signed by Fellenz after completing the project.